

NEWS RELEASE
Governor James E. McGreevey
August 6, 2004

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IDA L. CASTRO RESIGNS AS NEW JERSEY PERSONNEL COMMISSIONER

(TRENTON) — Governor James E. McGreevey today regretfully accepted the resignation of Department of Personnel Commissioner Ida L. Castro.

Castro, an accomplished lawyer with an extensive background in labor relations and civil rights, dedicated her tenure as Commissioner of Personnel to enhancing the merit system to ensure fairness and opportunities for all state employees. She is leaving her position in the Department of Personnel to become The Haywood Burns Chair in Civil Rights at CUNY School of Law.

“It is with great sadness that I accept Commissioner Castro’s resignation,” said Governor McGreevey. “Through her leadership, our state has a workforce that is today far better aligned with the needs of our citizens than it was two years ago.

“When I took office, I directed that Commissioner Castro, working with her fellow commissioners, manage the state’s human resources efficiently and effectively to ensure that the state’s greatest needs and priorities were met. Her efforts and leadership have resulted in a reduction of middle managers, an increase of frontline staff, and a more diverse workforce at all levels of state government.

“As the first Latina to serve in the role of Commissioner of Personnel, and as the highest ranking Latina in state government, Commissioner Castro has been invaluable in her outreach to Hispanics in New Jersey, the largest minority community in the state.

“As Chairwoman of the Hispanic Advisory Council, Commissioner Castro led in the development of the Hispanic Advisory Council 2003 Policy Report, a roadmap on substantive policy issues affecting New Jersey’s Hispanics. These recommendations are helping to ensure that New Jersey’s Latino community continues to move forward and help our state remain a great place for Hispanic families to live and work.

“Commissioner Castro’s commitment to fairness for all New Jerseyans will be genuinely missed. I wish her the best in her exciting new career opportunity, and hope she will continue to advise us on the important issues facing New Jersey.”

The Governor expects to appoint a new commissioner within the next several weeks.

In her resignation letter to the Governor, a copy of which is attached, Castro wrote:

“I wish to extend you my heartfelt gratitude for the opportunity to serve the great State of New Jersey, together with the outstanding team you have brought together, to ensure that

all New Jerseyans remain safe; that our communities grow stronger and smarter; that our children receive the best educational opportunities so they make take on the best jobs in the country; that we assume our rightful place leading the country in job creation; and that our state, local and municipal governments can count on a fair and efficient civil service system that will attract, nurture and retain the best and most talented individuals who will reflect all New Jerseyans,

“As I move on to help form a new generation of individuals in our profession committed to public service, I know that my experiences under your stewardship provide me with a stronger foundation, both theoretical and practical, and will enable me to be better academic and counselor.”

Under Commissioner Castro’s leadership, the Department’s achievements include:

- **iMPROVED and applied technology-** DOP is implementing CAMPS (County and Municipal Personnel System), a new web-based system that will allow county and municipal Appointing Authorities to transmit their employee information to NJ DOP via the Internet. DOP also launched a new on-line resume bank (DOP • PROS) that will help match qualified employees with intended employers.
- **Streamlining Application and Testing Process-**In partnership with the Department of Labor (DOL) and the Department of Transportation (DOT), local agencies now have the means to offer computer-based testing, regularly scheduled police and fire exams and police assistant programs.
- **Reduced Merit System Appeals-** In two years, the Department has significantly reduced appeal backlogs and waiting times for appeal resolution. The processing time for written record appeals in the areas of list removals, bypasses, sick leave injury (SLI) benefits, discrimination, minor discipline and grievances has been reduced from over one year to six months. Currently, there is no backlog in this area.
- **Shared Services - Shared Services Centers** deliver a majority of “traditional” Human Resource functions to state agencies. To better serve the assigned agencies, Shared Services has expanded to seven functioning centers to manage payroll, health and dental benefits, recruitment, time management, certifications and many more functions.

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August 1, 2004

Governor James E. McGreevey
New Jersey Statehouse
Trenton, New Jersey 08016

Dear Honorable James E. McGreevey,

You asked that I join your team in January 2002 as Commissioner of the Department of Personnel so that together we could embark in the noble goal of making sure that we returned government to serve the people of New Jersey ensuring that its' workforce fully reflect the richness in diversity of the State and that we change for the better the way we serve the our citizenry. It is with a great sense of accomplishment and pride that I tender my resignation to this post effective September 1, 2004 as I move on to return to my first career love and accept the invitation to serve as the Haywood Burns Chair at CUNY School of Law.

I wish to extend you my heartfelt gratitude for the opportunity to serve the great State of New Jersey together with the outstanding team you have brought together to ensure that all New Jerseyans remain safe; that our communities grow stronger and smarter; that our children receive the best educational opportunities so they may take on the best jobs in the country; that we assume our rightful place leading the country in job creation; and that our state, local and municipal governments count with a fair and efficient civil service system that will attract, nurture and retain the best and most talented individuals who will reflect all New Jerseyans.

At the Department of Personnel I have cut red tape and streamlined regulations so that a smaller but more focused staff can avail itself of the appropriate technological infrastructure and enable the State to recruit the most diverse and skilled workforce to its law enforcement and direct services ranks. You appointed the most diverse cabinet in the history of our State and can now rest assured that New Jersey has the most diverse workforce throughout its ranks in its history. I also strengthened our training capabilities to ensure that state, local and municipal governments can access quality affordable training that will maintain its' workforce well prepared to face myriad daily challenges, be it securing our communities, providing medical care, or protecting the most vulnerable children. And, by ensuring that processes were leaner yet better at the initial stages of our system, we have slashed by more than 50% the appeals before the Merit System Board--perhaps the most telling measurement of a system that guarantees opportunities for all.

By working closely with my colleagues I expanded the reach of our services through partnerships with the Departments of Labor and Transportation respectively. I also worked with the Departments of Education, Banking and Insurance and Motor Vehicles Commission, to name

just a few as we implemented shared services, improving thereby the quality of our services through consolidation and efficiency so that important resources could be reinvested to direct services. And, working in close coordination with the Department of Treasury, we were able to implement the Early Retirement Incentive program averting draconian layoffs and creating instead the opportunities to diversify our staff at all levels and redirect our efforts to protect the most vulnerable children, staff our institutions to care for the developmentally disabled, and strength our security.

As I move on to help form a new generation of individuals in our profession committed to public service, I know that my experiences under your stewardship provide me a stronger foundation, both theoretical and practical, and will enable me to be a better academic and counselor.

There are many memorable experiences that I will take with me, such as your appointment of the first Hispanic to sit on New Jersey's Supreme Court, a moment that I never thought I would actually experience. On behalf of the Latino/Hispanic community I will take this opportunity to share with you the overwhelming sense of pride and delight that your recognition of our communities' talents and potential and inclusion at the highest court of this state has given this important segment of our society.

And, you afforded me the opportunity to work side by side with the most extraordinary and talented group of public servants at the Department of Personnel, who embraced our ideas and assisted me in meeting your expectations.

Lastly, it was a privilege to serve with such a talented cabinet and governor staff. I am humbled by the opportunity to serve you in such outstanding company. Please know that I will continue to work hard to support your goals albeit in a different forum as I know that your vision for our state is the right one and that your commitment and determination will ensure that we continue our firm steps in the right direction.

Please know my support for your continued efforts to build a better and more prosperous New Jersey for all of us remains and I hope that you will call on me to further these common goals.

Sincerely,

Ida L. Castro

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Photos and audio and video clips from Governor McGreevey's press conferences are available in the Office of the Governor section on the State of New Jersey web page, <http://www.nj.gov/>.